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Producer defends anti-CIA program

By Arthur Unger

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Producer-director Allan Francovich doesn't flinch for a moment when his interviewer opens the discussion by telling him his three-hour film is too long and should be cut to 90 minutes.

He seats himself carefully in a comfortable chair in the interviewer's home and says calmly: "Well, it has already won prizes and much acclaim in foreign film festivals in its three-hour length...." That seems to end his consideration of the idea of cutting a work which is obviously a labor of love.

INTERVIEW

Mr. Francovich looks and sounds like a 1960s campus activist finally getting revenge for the way-out accusations he once aimed at the CIA, which were laughed off as outrageous then, but later proved to be mostly true. However, he insists that he was not a college activist. He lived and was educated in Latin America, attended college in Lima, Peru, and Paris. Well, throw in a few years at Notre Dame and the University of California at Berkeley and you may find a *little* campus activism.

Why is there not an interview in the film with the current head of the CIA?

"People won't make factual statements on current situations. People like Colby and Phillips and Agee talk openly because they are not in the establishment like Stansfield Turner, who will never talk in any detail about anything of substance."

Is Mr. Francovich a leftist politically?

"Left, liberal. But that has little to do with the film. An enormous effort went into testing everything that is in the film. There is nothing that could not be backed up by a lot of other information. A lot of the CIA intervention during the early years was a natural response to Stalin."

"I made a deliberate effort to make sure that this would not be the kind of film that those student activists would make. I think if you do have a certain perspective on things, it has to be tested against the historical record. For instance, it's quite different to interview some student activist who's been involved against the current regime in Chile and have him tell you something and then to sit down with the former ambassador to Chile or Laure Allende. You get real perspective that way."

Do we need the CIA at all?

"I think there's a need for intelligence. But a lot of what the CIA has been doing is not intelligence.

It is actively involved in intervening in these countries, penetrating all kinds of institutions of power. There is no reason to think that the same people who are doing this won't use the same methods here in the US sooner or later. The cases are becoming more and more frequent. This kind of manipulation simply does not work in the long run."

But isn't Russia doing the same kind of political mischief and manipulation?

"I don't know. I've asked people in the CIA and I've been told that, at least in Latin America, the Russians operate in a different way. If you look at the historical record, the CIA has been essentially running Iran for the last 30 years despite the fact that the country borders on the Soviet Union. There would be every reason for the Soviet Union to dominate Iran as much as the US dominates Guatemala...."

Or Cuba? What about the Soviet attempt to dominate Cuba?

Mr. Francovich looks a bit embarrassed. "Well, you have to ask yourself: The Russians are helping Cuba but do they have control over the Cuban government?"

Probably.

"Well, in my film Victor Marchetti, who was a high-ranking CIA official at the time that Castro came to power, believes to this day that Castro was Cuban nationalist until Nixon and the CIA started a whole campaign of destabilization, attacks, assassination attempts, etc., against the Cuban regime. Marchetti believes it was our policies at that stage which pushed Castro into the arms of the Soviets."

"If you start intervening in a country like Cuba or Iran, what you are doing is gradually pushing them until they will get help from wherever they can get it... usually the Soviets. You are polarizing the world rather than treating these countries with some respect and accepting that these countries have every right to take the position which they think they should in the world. If you run sabotage missions, burn cane fields, poison livestock, try to murder leaders as we did in Cuba for many years, you can't expect those people to love you...."

"If the CIA is allowed to proceed in the next 20 years the way they have proceeded in the past 20, it is simply going to force those countries into closer contact with Russia and

But what makes Mr. Francovich so certain that Russia and China are not doing very similar things?

"I think they are obviously involved in furthering their national ends, but I think their way of operating is different. For instance, Russia provides a lot of help to countries in Africa. They had a long-standing relationship with the Angolans before the Portuguese were kicked out. And what they were doing was providing training and arms...."

Is that so different from what we were doing? Mightn't a filmmaker find the same kind of atrocity stories about the KGB which this movie uncovers about the CIA?

"It's hard for me to say...." Wouldn't it be hard for you to gather information? Wouldn't you lack the freedom which allows you to do this kind of film here?

"Yes. But I would leave that kind of show to CBS or NBC or ABC."

Does Mr. Francovich feel the CIA is now under control? It is a question asked in the third hour of the film.

"I think it has always been under control. If I wanted to summarize what the film says, I think it says that the CIA really is not the problem. You have to look deeper, ask yourself what the foreign policy of this country is. And you have to look at the CIA as an instrument for serving this policy. Why is it that over the years this country has seen fit to support all kinds of people who are being hated?" So, does Mr. F. believe there is a secret cabal leading our relations with foreign countries?

"No. There are certain goals, dynamics that are inherent in our economy. If you were president of Bell Helicopter, you are not going to let them take away \$300 million that you are making out of the Shah's regime just because some guy in the State Department or even the CIA says that in the long range this will be counterproductive...."

Does Mr. F. want the CIA to be dissolved?

"No. I think it is part of government. But the very nature of this beast is to do things in such a way that the US government itself can disclaim responsibility. I think that has to change."

But hasn't all diplomacy changed? Mightn't it be that the age of top-hat-and-tails diplomacy is over, that CIA "mischief diplomacy" is the way all the major powers will be handling foreign relations from now on? Perhaps what Mr. F. is yearning for is a return to an era that will never come back?

"No, I don't think so. That is always the rationale."